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Director

County of Los Angeles DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

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October 1, 2004

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina, Chair Pro Tem
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: David Sanders, Ph.D. 
Director

Board of Supervisors

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APRIL 27, 2004 BOARD AGENDA ITEM #13: KIDSAVE

On May 26, 2004, a response was submitted to the Board regarding the motion by Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich regarding the Kidsave program. The Board ordered the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to review the model developed by Kidsave as it relates to finding parents for older youth and report back to the Board within 45 days with recommendations to incorporate the Kidsave model into the Department's plan to increase permanency for foster youth in Los Angeles County, ages 14 years and older.

As previously reported, Kidsave is developing a protocol in partnership with Fairfax County, Virginia for a Weekend Miracles program. The concept for this program is to build a pool of families who will support permanence for older children by incorporating a combination of strategies including: community education and outreach, short stays over weekends with host families who act as personal advocates, child and family preparation and support, personal advocacy by lay people, development of a mentoring program, and development of social work training.

As stated in the May 26, 2004 report to the Board, it was determined that the Kidsave Weekend Miracles program contains elements that are directly in line with the Department's plan of March 18, 2004 to increase permanency for foster youth ages 14 and older. It is also in line with the Adoption Recruitment Plan submitted to and approved by the Board on December 26, 2003 and the updated report dated June 1, 2004.

DCFS agreed that, once Kidsave finalized their protocol with Fairfax County and established a budget, DCFS would utilize that information as a template to assess the existing financial and staffing resources as well as additional resources needed to develop and successfully implement a similar Los Angeles County Weekend Miracles program.

Each Supervisor
October 1, 2004
Page 2

Unfortunately, Kidsave has been unable to complete the Weekend Miracles protocol for Fairfax County to date. While they have made progress, they are still finalizing issues such as defining specific staff responsibilities, developing a working agreement and budget, establishing funding sources, developing staff training, and developing materials. At this time, Fairfax County and Kidsave are estimating a cost to their County of \$10,000 per child and a cost to Kidsave of \$15,000 per child for an estimated total of \$25,000 per child. This includes Fairfax County committing two full time social work staff to their program along with additional duties being assigned to existing recruitment and placement social workers. Once Fairfax County creates a finalized budget and DCFS has the opportunity to review it, the Board of Supervisors and DCFS Senior Managers will be better able to determine what financial and human resources would be needed should we decide to proceed.

During the past 3 months, DCFS has maintained regular contact with Kidsave staff and has been reviewing their updates on the Fairfax County Protocol. DCFS has created a list of the children who may benefit from the Kidsave program. However, specific children have not been identified for participation, as it would be premature until the program is established. Also, DCFS is considering modifying the program to utilize existing foster and adoptive parents to be hosts or advocates and partnering with faith-based communities in helping identify mentors and advocates for the program.

Fairfax County and Kidsave report that they expect to complete their protocol within the next three months utilizing that information, DCFS can report to the Board by February 2005 the feasibility of creating a Los Angeles Weekend Miracles Program to help achieve our outcome goal of reducing timelines to permanence for older children.

DS:TP:sg

Chief Administrative Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel